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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 000791

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL AO ZI

SUBJECT: ANGOLAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO ZIMBABWE

Classified By: Joseph G. Sullivan for reasons 1.5(b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Angolan Foreign Minister Joao Miranda visited Zimbabwe March 22-24 and met with Government and MDC leaders. Miranda, who will chair the SADC Task Force on Zimbabwe visit next month told us that the clear focus of his visit was on Zimbabwe's crisis, although he met GOZ denial and ambivalence about facing up to the problems. Miranda was whisked on a magical mystery tour by the GOZ, but saw the effective work stayaway for himself. We believe that Miranda gathered a very good appreciation for the depth of Zimbabwe's problems and for the critical need to address Zimbabwe's political crisis. Miranda for the most part abstained from public remarks during his visit. His visit will provide useful input for President Dos Santos who will open the Zimbabwe Trade Fair next week. End Summary.

2.(c) Angolan Foreign Minister Joao Miranda visited Zimbabwe for less than 48 hours and the GOZ sought to monopolize his time, even taking him on a 6-hour trip to Manicaland to view "successful" examples of the land redistribution exercise. Accompanying Agriculture Minister Made claimed to Miranda that corn production this year would be 1.4 million metric tons (unlikely). Having had his previously scheduled meeting time with MDC President Tsvangirai pre-empted, Miranda met with Tsvangirai on the morning of April 24, as well as with President Mugabe.

3.(c) The Ambassador met with Miranda on the evening of April 23 at the Angolan Ambassador's residence. Miranda described his GOZ hosts as ambivalent over whether to confront their own crisis or to pretend that the crisis would go away and that their excuses for inability to compromise were real. Miranda met with President Mugabe, parliamentary speaker Mnangagwa, Foreign Minister Mudenge, and Agriculture Minister Made. Miranda had noted how effective the ZCTU work stayaway was and believed that Zimbabwe's crisis required a political solution. He had encouraged his hosts to drop the treason case against Tsvangirai, and when they claimed juridical impediments, suggested amnesty. Miranda told us that he did not think that an election rerun was an answer, but agreed that Mugabe was an impediment to a solution and that it was inconceivable to imagine Mugabe serving out his full term. Miranda was also disinclined to favor an interim government because of African history of such governments remaining indefinitely. We encouraged Miranda to think of a package, including Mugabe's resignation at an early date, coupled with agreement with the opposition on a new election date and a transitional government while election procedures are corrected and the rule of law is restored. Miranda was inclined to press the MDC to drop its election suit, but seemed to accept that it would be more practical to expect such action in the context of a global agreement.

¶4. (c) Miranda told us that he was letting his GOZ hosts know that regional backing only extended so far and that the region was becoming impatient with Zimbabwe's crisis and the GOZ's unwillingness to face it. He said that South African and Angolan(Miala) intelligence services were now working well together and that Zimbabwe's problems were the principal topic among them. Because we were not sure how much the Angolans have been briefed, we did not raise the now postponed visit of Presidents Muluzi and Mbeki.

¶5. (c) Miranda was very conscious of his hosts' tendency to manipulate any comments by visitors into signs of support. He consequently refrained from public comment for the most part and called on all political parties and social forces to work together to overcome Zimbabwe's problems. Asked about the agrarian project he had seen, Miranda gave away the least possible, calling it "a good start." As a sure sign of state media frustration, ZBC reporters took to reporting what they would have liked Miranda to say.

¶6. (c) Angolan President Dos Santos is scheduled to visit Zimbabwe next week to open the Zimbabwe trade fair in Bulawayo, although Dos Santos has a history of canceling planned travel at the last minute. (The trade fair itself will be even less impressive than a year ago.)

¶7. (c) Comment: We are confident that Miranda gained a solid appreciation for the depth of Angola's crisis and expect that he will have an opportunity to brief President Dos Santos prior to his visit next week. Whether the non-confrontational Dos Santos is willing to deliver any hard messages remains to be seen and whether Mugabe would be

inclined to listen to such messages is also in doubt.
SULLIVAN